स्वास्थ्य और परिवार कल्याण मंत्री तथा संसदीय कार्य मंत्री (श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज): उपसभापति महोदया, यह मसला मेरे ज़ेरे-नजर है पहले से मेरे पास आया हुआ है, मैं इसको दिखवा रही हूं और जल्दी ही इस पर हम कोई फैसला करेंगे।

Further detention of Fishermen of Tamil Nadu by Sri Lankan Navy

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI (Tamil Nadu): Madam, after our submission of the Special Mention regarding the problems faced by the Indian fishermen hailing from Tamil Nadu, further detentions have taken place. Hundreds of fishermen have been arrested and their vessels have also been confiscated. The Sri Lankan Navy has also taken away their catches. When this is so, I want to just take two minutes to mention a few facts here.

Madam, we all know that the Government of India has had several bilateral talks with the Sri Lankan Government. In the recent SAARC Conference held in Colombo, our hon. Prime Minister himself had informal talks with them on this issue. In spite of that, they are still indulging in this misadventure, and they are arresting our fishermen under one pretext or the other. The main reason for this is due to the two different Agreements which have been entered into at various levels. I am mentioning it for the information of the hon. Minister of External Affairs. One Agreement was signed at the Ministerial level. Then, at the Secretary-level talks, another Agreement was signed whereby all the privileges and rights, which the fishermen were enjoying so far, have been taken away. This Agreement has been reached between the Secretaries. I hope the Ministry of External Affairs will look into that. That is one important thing.

Madam, another thing is that if the Sri Lankan refugees want to go back to their homeland, the Government of India itself should arrange for their repatriation. This is the second thing. Therefore, I urge upon the Government to see to it that a permanent solution is found. As such, we are raising this issue every month and in every Session. And, the Government also gives its assurance that they would look into this matter and see to it that all the fishermen are released. Through you, Madam, I request the Government of India to hold further talks and ensure that all the fishermen, who have been arrested and kept inside jails, are released immediately without any conditions. Also, thier vessels must be given back to them. The Sri Lankan Navy must also give an assurance that their catches are not taken away. It is a very important thing.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Virumbi, when Shri Narayanan was making his Special Mention...

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN (Tamil Nadu): The Sri Lankan Navy has committed this kind of atrocities against the fishermen repeatedly. But the Government is not taking any steps in this regard.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Government has noted it. The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is going to convey your concern as well as all of ours to the Government

Mr. Virumbi, as I informed Shri Narayanan, the Sri Lankan Minister of Shipping had called on me for some other reason, but I mentioned to him this concern, and I told him that this matter would be raised in the House today. This has been raised before also. It is a humanitarian problem. The poor fishermen have no fault of their own and they suffer. Their catches are also confiscated. I have already conveyed it at my level, and I am sure, the Government will take appropriate action.

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN: But the Government has to take this matter very seriously.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: If Deputy Chairman takes it seriously, they will also take it seriously.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): We are taking it very seriously.

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Madam, through you, I thank the hon. Minister for taking it seriously.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: She may look smiling but basically, she is a very serious person with a good smile on her face.

So, we come to the end of the Special Mentions.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Indian Medicine Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2003

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We will now taken up the Indian Medicine Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2003. As Sushmaji has told me, there is